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Computer at UM helps speechless to communicate

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MEDIA RELEASE

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COMPUTER AT UM HELPS
SPEECHLESS TO COMMUNICATE

MISSOULA--

People who cannot use speech or sign language to communicate can have voices through computers equipped with special devices to help them overcome communication disabilities.

The University of Montana Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) will purchase one of those computers for training speech therapists and vocally disabled people. This equipment has not previously been available in this geographic area.

Funds for the new equipment and programs were donated by the 1,500-member Lions Clubs International District 37D of western Montana and southern Alberta.

The UM Non-Vocal Communication Program, administered by Kellogg Lyndes, associate professor of CSD, and Frances Tucker, CSD instructor, offers services to people with disabilities from birth defects, progressive neurological diseases, injuries, strokes or other conditions that make speech difficult.

The computer soon to arrive at UM is an Apple II-E outfitted with special features to make it accessible and flexible. For example, one of its monitors will have an adjustable tilting face to accommodate users who are not able to shift themselves away from glare on the glass.

Other features include a two-switch function for Morse code and one switch for alphabets that can be triggered by any part of the body, adjustable-speed video games for motor coordination and socialization, speech synthesizers to

computer at um helps--add one

reproduce word-like sounds and printers.

The Apple II-E model computer was chosen for the project because it is the most common small computer in school systems and has the most programs available for use in special education, Lyndes said.

Once disabled people learn to use a computer like the Apple model, they can quickly adapt to small, portable computers that are coming on the market.

The computer gives children other advantages. With its aid, subject to individual limitations, they can do regular classroom work. Since the training programs include video games, the disabled children can socialize with the other youngsters who play the games with them.

Faculty members in the UM Non-Vocal Program will use the computer in teaching CSD students and also in consulting work with speech therapists and educators in the Rocky Mountain region who request help.

The Non-Vocal Program has been able to purchase \$6,900 worth of computer equipment and programs with the original \$5,000 gift from the Lions Club. The gift was awarded competitively on a national basis. Leading the Lions 37D District project were Dale Pelten, Kalispell, chairman of the Lions' Non-Vocal Program Committee, and Don Aadsen, Ronan, liaison officer for the Lions.

Inquiries about the Non-Vocal Program should be directed to Lyndes or Tucker in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812, (406) 243-4131.

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